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1842

Wes. 1786



THE GREAT SUPPER:

OR,

AN INVITATION TO OUR ABSENT FRIENDS.

BY THE REV. CHARLES WESLEY, A. M.,

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ADVERTISEMENT.

AT the sale of the truly Reverend Dr. ADAM CLARKE's manuscripts, in June, 1836, one was purchased which the Catalogue correctly described, (Lot 499,) as "the Rev. Charles Wesley's Hymn-Book, ms. ;" and of which the Doctor himself has given this plain account, on one of the fly-leaves of the volume :—

"THIS Hymn-Book, composed and written by CHARLES WESLEY, was brought from Savannah, in Georgia, and presented to me, by the late Rev. Dr. KOLLOCK, of the United States.

"A. CLARKE."

The book is in the hand-writing of the Rev. CHARLES WESLEY, and contains some of the first of his poetic effusions after his conversion. In a short-hand note, at the end, is found the date of 1743 ; and it is highly probable that several of the hymns were com-

posed in the preceding year, if not at a date much earlier : for on the 47th page is inserted an Epitaph on Miss Fanny Cowper, who died in June, 1742.

Such is, in brief, the description of the volume from which the subjoined poem has been accurately transcribed, through the kindness of THOMAS MARRIOTT, Esq., whose treasury of Wesleyan documents, printed and in manuscript, is "rich beyond compare," and liberally open to the inspection and use of all those who require the assistance which it affords in their diversified researches.

Out of the twenty-four stanzas of which the poem consists, the Rev. John Wesley selected, with exquisite taste and judgment, nine verses,* which he considered to be the best adapted to the purposes of public worship ; and in the Wesleyan "Collection" they now constitute the second hymn, which has always been admired for its sacred pathos and simplicity.

* They are stanzas 1, 2, 12, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 24 in the original poem.

The interlocutory mould in which the author has cast the parable, imparts to his production much vivacity and interest. The loving tone of impassioned entreaty which the servant adopts in his addresses to the three distinct classes to whom he is deputed by his gracious Lord,—and his modest account of the manner in which each party received the message of invitation,—are delineated with the hand of a master in the divine art of genuine poesy.

Little doubt can be entertained that he subsequently revised and polished these verses, as was his practice with all the choicest of his poetical effusions ; to some of which, often after the interval of years, he gave many touches, generally recording each in succession as likely to be his final revision. No revised copy of this description being now extant, his short poem is published in the form in which it came into my possession,—with the exception of the separate portions of the parable in prose, that are now prefixed to the stanzas to which they severally belong.

Beside its being regarded as another monument of the gifted author's fervent piety, as well as of his fertile imagination, this production is a real literary curiosity, exhibiting as it does a specimen of the variegated flowers, from which the practised eye and chaste hand of his elder brother culled just so many as aided his design, in forming and arranging not a few of those admirable chaplets which adorn his unrivalled and imperishable "Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists."

JAMES NICHOLS.

46, HOXTON-SQUARE,
July 28th, 1842.

THE GREAT SUPPER.

LUKE XIV. 16.

A CERTAIN man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, "Come; for all things are now ready."

I.

COME, sinners, to the gospel-feast;
Let every soul be Jesu's guest;
Ye need not *one* be left behind,
For God hath bidden *all mankind*.

II.

Sent by my Lord, on you I call;
The invitation is to ALL:
Come, all the world! Come, sinner, *thou*!
All things in Christ are ready now.

III.

Jesus to you his fulness brings,
A feast of marrow and fat things.
All, all in Christ are freely given,
Pardon, and happiness, and heaven.

And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused." And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused." And another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."

IV.

Do not begin to make excuse !
 Ah ! do not *you* his grace refuse !
 Your worldly cares and pleasures leave ;
 And take what Jesus hath to give.

V.

Your grounds forsake ; your oxen quit ;
 Your every earthly thought forget ;
 Seek not the comforts of this life,
 Nor lose *your* Saviour—for a wife.

VI.

"Have me excused," why will ye say ?
 Why will ye for damnation pray ?
 Have you *excused*—from joy and peace !
 Have you *excused*—from happiness !

VII.

Excused—from coming to a feast !
Excused—from being Jesu's guest !
 From knowing *here* your sins forgiven,
 From tasting *now* the joys of heaven !

VIII.

Excused, alas, why would you be
 From health, and life, and liberty ?
 From entering into glorious rest,
 From leaning on your Saviour's breast !

So that servant came, and showed his Lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, " Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind."

IX.

Yet must I, Lord, to thee complain,
 The world have made thine offers vain :
 Too busy or too happy they,
 They will not, Lord, thy call obey.

X.

" Go, then," my angry Master said,
 " Since *these* on all my mercies tread,
 Invite the rich and great no more,
 But preach the gospel to the poor !

XI.

" Confer not thou with flesh and blood !
 Go quickly forth ; invite the crowd ;
 Search every lane and every street,
 And bring in all the souls you meet."

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XII.

Come, all ye souls by sin opprest,
 Ye restless wanderers after rest,
 Ye poor, and maim'd, and halt, and blind,
 In Christ a hearty welcome find.

XIII.

SINNERS my gracious Lord receives,—
 Harlots, and publicans, and thieves !
 Drunkards, and all the hellish crew,
 I have a message now to you !

XIV.

Come, and partake the Gospel feast ;
 Be saved from sin ; in Jesus rest ;
 O taste the goodness of your God,
 And eat his flesh, and drink his blood !

And the servant said, “ Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.” And the lord said unto the servant, “ Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”

XV.

'Tis done, my all-redeeming Lord !
 I have gone forth, and preach'd thy word :
 The sinners to thy feast are come ;
 And yet, O Jesus, there is room, .

XVI.

“Go then,” my Lord again enjoin’d,
 “And other wandering sinners find ;
 Go to the hedges and high-ways,
 And offer ALL my pardoning grace.

XVII.

“The worst unto my supper press,—
 Monsters of daring wickedness !
 Tell them my grace for ALL is free ;
 They cannot be too lost for me.

XVIII.

“Tell them their sins are all forgiven !
 Tell every creature under heaven,
 I died to save them from their sin ;
 And force the rebels to come in.”

.....

XIX.

Ye vagrant souls, on you I call ;
 (O that my voice could reach you all !)
 Ye all may now be justified ;
 Ye all may live, for Christ hath died.

XX.

My message as from God receive ;
 Ye all may come to Christ, and live ;
 O let his love your hearts constrain,
 Nor suffer him to die in vain.

XXI.

His love is mighty to compel ;
 His conquering love consent to feel ;
 Yield to his love's resistless power,
 And fight against your God no more.

XXII.

See him set forth before your eyes,
 That precious bleeding Sacrifice !
 His offer'd benefits embrace,
 And freely now be saved by grace.

XXIII.

Ye who believe his record true,
 Shall sup with him, and he with you :
 Come to the feast, be saved from sin,
 For Jesus waits to take you in.

XXIV.

This is the time, no more delay ;
 This is the acceptable day ;
 Come in, this moment, at his call,
 And live for HIM who died for ALL.

THE END.

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